

LEARNING FROM PRACTICE: PREVENTION SERIES

# EXPLORING INTERSECTIONAL APPROACHES TO PREVENT VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

LESSONS FROM CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS FUNDED BY THE UN TRUST FUND TO END VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

MDRI in Serbia advocates for the rights of women with disabilities, which brought the perspectives of women with disabilities to public attention. Credit: Viktor Ljevar/MDRI (Serbia)

Understanding how existing vulnerabilities intersect with gender in complex ways is an important element in the prevention of violence against women and girls (VAW/G). The risk of violence for women and girls is impacted by their gender and a variety of other factors, including if they are: living with HIV; pregnant; lesbian, bisexual or transgender (LBT); a girl or an older woman; living with a disability; a migrant; a trafficking survivor; a self-identified sex worker; displaced or out of school; or a member of a racial, ethnic or religious minority group.

This paper, part of the Learning from Practice: Prevention Series, draws together lessons learned by 10 UN Trust Fund-supported organizations in Chile, China, Colombia, Guatemala, Jamaica, Jordan, Moldova, Serbia, Thailand and Zimbabwe who have applied intersectional approaches to preventing VAW/G. The findings highlight the need to identify specific groups of women and girls who face multiple forms of discrimination to understand and address how these intersect to affect women's risk of violence. The research found that intersectional approaches to VAW/G prevention have proved effective.

Key lessons learned include:

## 1. Make intersecting vulnerabilities visible

The invisibility of intersecting vulnerabilities often increases women's exposure to violence and can mean specific needs go unmet. For example, in **Moldova**, HelpAge, which focuses on a human rights, gender-transformative approach to the prevention of violence against older women, realized that most VAW/G prevention services were unaware of the needs of older women and the violence they experienced in their homes, and therefore ignored them. To make visible intersecting vulnerabilities can also mean facing the reality of discrimination and stigma, often internalized by project participants.

## 2. Participate in intersectional approaches

The 10 civil society and women's rights organizations found that impactful VAW/G prevention services required that women with intersecting vulnerabilities to violence assist in the design of projects, and that during

project implementation there should be a willingness to adapt and evolve programme design based on the women's needs and priorities. This approach was adopted by FSIS in **Guatemala** when working with migrant self-identified sex workers. The organization learned about the beneficiaries' needs and priorities by regularly organizing focus groups with them, and adapted their programme design accordingly.

### 3. Understand the importance of partnering

Multiple partnerships between organizations that represent different groups with compounded intersecting vulnerabilities can benefit VAW/G prevention initiatives. For example, Equality (**China**) partnered with Common Language, Media Monitor for Women Network and the Women's Network against AIDS in China to design a collaborative project that engaged with LBT women, women affected by HIV and young women, with a particular focus on creating shared awareness of domestic violence and relevant legislation.

#### Key recommendations by practitioners include:

- VAW/G researchers should engage with the complexity and compounded realities of women's lives that heighten their risk of violence.
- Practitioners should pay attention to multidimensional power relations, and engage with the individuals, groups and systems that make women and girls with intersecting vulnerabilities not visible and at risk of violence.
- Donors and policymakers should fund collaborative work between local civil society organizations that are already engaging with diverse groups, which may help to reduce fragmentation of policies or funding.

For the full set of conclusions and recommendations, please read the paper through the QR code below:



## About the Prevention Series

As part of its commitment to elevating practice-based knowledge, the UN Trust Fund commissioned a prevention series of 10 papers on "Learning from Practice", produced in collaboration with almost 100 grantees and external researchers. Each paper in the series draws on the monitoring and evaluation reports of 10 civil society organizations that are implementing prevention projects funded by the UN Trust Fund in different countries and contexts. The findings identified 10 key pathways to prevent violence against women and girls. Each theme is explored in conversations with 10 grantees, resulting in one detailed report per theme.

Scan the QR code below to listen to a podcast about this topic.



## About the UN Trust Fund

The UN Trust Fund, managed by UN Women on behalf of the UN system, remains the only global, multilateral grant-giving mechanism exclusively dedicated to supporting efforts to prevent and end violence against women and girls. Since its establishment in 1996 by UN General Assembly [resolution 50/166](#), the UN Trust Fund has awarded USD 215 million to 646 initiatives in 140 countries and territories. Focusing on preventing violence, implementing laws and policies, and improving access to vital services for survivors, the UN Trust Fund invests in life-changing initiatives for millions of women and girls around the world.

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